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RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3462  
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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1823  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002748

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP  
NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM KISL PINR PHUM ID

SUBJECT: CALL HIM NOTORIOUS -- EX-GENERAL RELOADS FOR  
PRESIDENTIAL RUN

REF: 06 JAKARTA 13577

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b,d).

SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) Nearly three years after Indonesian voters delivered ex-General Wiranto a resounding electoral rebuke, the notorious human rights violator is trying to build the foundation for one more long-shot run at the presidency. Wiranto's political party has reportedly established some 400 branch offices and poached enough key operatives to make Wiranto and the party credible players in the lead-up to the 2009 election. Wiranto's deep pockets--coupled with his name recognition--put him on the short list for the 2009 race, even if most observers manifestly doubt that he can win. END SUMMARY.

THE PARTY IS ON

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¶2. (C) As reported in Ref A, General (ret) Wiranto (one name only) established his People's Conscience Party (Hanura) late last year after Indonesia's largest party, Golkar, effectively shunned the retired general in the wake of his failed 2004 presidential run. According to Mission contacts, Wiranto has quickly developed his Hanura party into a nationwide presence, opening up over 400 party offices throughout the archipelago. Contacts in the Indonesian parliament (DPR) have suggested that newly formed parties like Hanura will be required to maintain chapters in all 33 provinces and in 75 percent of the districts, and Hanura already seems to be in a position to meet this participatory threshold. Hanura would appear far less likely, however, to be able to nominate a presidential candidate on its own. Candidates will likely require the support of parties or coalitions of parties with 10-15 percent of the seats in the DPR and this figure is beyond Hanura's reach.

¶3. (C) Several Mission contacts reported that Wiranto has aggressively tapped into the "Old Order" military network to build an impressive financial base for Hanura. In many

instances, Wiranto has also allegedly recruited retired generals and lower ranking officials away from Golkar and the President's own Democratic Party (PD). Poempida Hidayatulloh, Golkar's Deputy Treasurer, told Poloff that Wiranto managed to pry away key Golkar officials at the national, regional, and district levels. Although Poempida doubted the Golkar defections would have any practical effect on Golkar's 2009 performance, he believed those former Golkar officials played a crucial role in building-up Hanura quickly from scratch.

MAN OF ACTION?

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¶4. (C) Despite his electoral belly flop in 2004 (Wiranto came in third in the presidential primary) and his reputation as an international pariah, Wiranto still has a following among Jakarta's elite. Pol/C, for example, who lives in Menteng--a mainly residential district that is Jakarta's equivalent to the Upper East Side or Nob Hill--has noticed large-scale meetings almost every night at Wiranto's political office across the street, with hordes of expensive cars parked on the curb.

¶5. (C) The most common argument for a Wiranto candidacy can be summed up with one word: decisiveness. While many Mission contacts often blast President Yudhoyono for an overly pensive and languorous decision-making style, they praise Wiranto for his tough-mindedness and his iron fist. Wiranto's strongest perceived asset is allegedly SBY's most obvious shortcoming. After all, they argue, what better palliative for a country hamstrung they claim by an overly deliberate president than Wiranto, a former general who demonstrated that he would never let a trivial thing like human rights stand in the way of a good crackdown. (Note: Wiranto was indicted by a UN-sponsored East Timor special

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crimes unit for the atrocities committed by soldiers and others following East Timor's 1999 vote for independence.)

¶6. (C) Yuddy Chrisnandi, a Golkar parliamentarian and close friend of Wiranto's, pushed the decisiveness issue with Poloff in a recent meeting. According to Chrisnandi, Wiranto would look much more attractive to voters in 2009-- following five years under SBY--than he did in 2004. The human rights concerns that dogged Wiranto's 2004 campaign would be long forgotten by 2009, he said. When Poloff noted that many contacts had suggested that Wiranto might ask Chrisnandi to serve as his running mate, Chrisnandi confirmed that this was a possibility and made little effort to contain his excitement.

¶7. (C) Poloff asked Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) parliamentarian Zulkieflimansyah for his thoughts on a possible Wiranto candidacy and Zulkieflimansyah stated unequivocally that he thought Wiranto could win. According to Zulkieflimansyah, Wiranto would match-up favorably against SBY if he made it into a run-off against him, as most voters would contrast the two and likely find SBY lacking in comparison.

OR A RELIC?

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¶8. (C) Despite Wiranto's impressive work in putting together a party virtually overnight, many Mission contacts remain unimpressed. New political parties spring up in Indonesia virtually every day and Hanura will need to deliver results in 2009 in order to win over its many skeptics. Besides, Wiranto himself has performed very poorly in all of the pre-election polling, rarely garnering more than a small percentage of the prospective vote.

¶9. (C) Ridwan Soeriyadi, a contact with the Democratic Party, told Poloff that Hanura would be lucky to win two percent of

the seats in the DPR. He characterized Hanura as a transparent money making vehicle for retired generals, and he dismissed Wiranto and his Old Order style of politicking as a relic of the past. According to Ridwan, voters were sophisticated enough to see through Wiranto in 2004, and Ridwan believed they would be similarly unimpressed with Wiranto and his new party in 2009. Yahya Asagaf, a political appointee at the State Intelligence Agency (BIN), seconded this assessment, and predicted that Hanura would do "very poorly" in 2009.

THE STIGMA THAT ENDURES

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¶10. (C) With plenty of time left until the 2009 elections, Wiranto, at a minimum, has to feel pretty pleased with the fact that his party is in position to at least compete in the legislative races. Wiranto, like former president Megawati, has to be taken very seriously. That said, he is so stigmatized by his awful human rights record and his links to the Suharto period that most observers manifestly doubt he can win the presidency.

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